

Message Text

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53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 ACDA-07 /085 W

----- 026176

O 081030Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9955

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

CIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLKVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4103

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

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SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION 8 MAY 1976: CHANCE FOR ELECTION

OF SARKIS TODAY IMPROVING

REFS: BEIRUT 4081 (DTG 071250Z MAY 76), BEIRUT 4095 (NOTAL)

1. AT NOON LOCAL TIME MAY 8, REMAINS UNCERTAIN THAT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAN BE HELD TODAY BUT CHANCES IMPROVING. SOME 64 DEPUTIES, INCLUDING SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD, NOW REPORTED GATHERED AT VILLA MANSOUR IN MUSEUM ARE--BUT ROADS TO AREA IN WEST BEIRUT REMAIN BLOCKED, AND FIRING IN AUDIBLE IN SOME PARTS OF TOWN.

2. LATEST ALIGNMENT DEVELOPMENT IS DECLARATION OF SUPPORT FOR ELIAS SARKIS BY PARLIAMENT SPEAKER KAMAL ASSAD, ADDING SOME DOZEN OR SO VOTES TOWARD REQUISITE 66 TO ELECT PRESIDENT ON FIRST BALLOT. PHALANGE NOW FEEL IT HAS SUFFICIENT VOTES TO PUT SARKIS IN IF IT CAN GET PEOPLE TO A MEETING, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE CANDIDACY OF SARKIS HAS ALSO BEEN ENHANCED BY A "NO OBJECTION" POSITION TAKEN BY FATAH. THIS DEVELOPMENT SEEN PARTIALLY AS RESULT OF RECENT MEETINGS BETWEEN 'ARAFAT AND SYRIAN PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASAD.

3. AS OF LATE LAST NIGHT, THERE WAS "NO RECONCILIATION" BETWEEN JUMBLATT AND ASAD, DESPITE 'ARAFAT'S EFFORTS IN DAMASCUS. THERE IS GROWING FATAH IRRITATION WITH THE LEFT, PARTICULARLY JUMBLATT'S GROUP, OVER BEING "DRAGGED INTO" SITUATION. JUMBLATT IS INCREASINGLY IRRATIONAL ON SUBJECT OF SYRIA AND SEVERAL OF HIS MORE MODERATE AIDES HAVE BECOME DISENCHANTED BY THEIR RECENT INABILITY TO INFLUENCE HIS MOOD AND BEHAVIOR.

4. THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND LIKEWISE REMAINS OMINOUS, PARTICULARLY IN THE MOUNTAINS WHERE FIGHTING APPEARS TO BE ON THE UPSWING WITH CHRISTIANS INCREASINGLY ON OFFENSIVE IN METN AREA, AGAINST AYTURA AND MUTAYN. FIGHTING CONTINUES AS WELL BETWEEN ALEY AND KAHHALE AND WE UNDERSTAND THERE IS SOME FIGHTING IN NORTH LEBANON. JUMBLATT'S TRADITIONAL SHOUF AREA HAS TAKEN ON MORE AND MORE APPEARANCE OF AUTONOMOUS
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ADMINISTRATION WITH ROAD TAXES IMPOSED. HOWEVER, THIS MAY BE JUST OSTENTATIOUS DISPLAY OF ELECTION OPPOSITION. IN BEIRUT ROAD TRAFFIC AT STANDSTILL IN MANY AREAS DUE MANY LEFTIST ROADBLOCKS. OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO EMBASSY IS ROADBLOCK ON CORNICHE AT WHICH SEVERAL CARS HAVE BEEN BURNED SINCE THIS SECTOR BECAME ACTIVE ABOUT 0400 MAY 8 LOCAL. THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY (PLA) REPORTED NOW TRYING

TO OPEN CORNICHE BUT HAS NOT RPT NOT USED FORCE THUS
FAR.

ZTM OVERALL PROGNOSIS GRIM IF ELECTION DOES NOT COME
OFF TODAY. MARONITE CIRCLES CONTINUE TO WORRY ABOUT
SECURITY SITUATION BEFORE AND AFTER ELECTIONS AND SEEK
ASSURANCES THAT U.S. WILL "DO SOMETHING." THE DIS-
APPEARANCE OF CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S NEPHEW STILL CONTRI-
BUTING SUBSURFACE TENSION AND WE UNDERSTAND FATAH
BELIEVES CHAMOUN DEAD BUT FEAR SAY SO LEAST LARGE
SCALE CHRISTIAN REPRISALS.

6. EMBASSY IS TEMPORARILY PROHIBITING OFFICIALS
FROM USE BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. AIRPORT IS
STILL OPERATIONAL, BUT ROAD TO AND FROM CITY VERY
RISKY AT THIS TIME.
BROWN

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NNN

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